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INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE

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RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 6244

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ASHGABAT 000193

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TAGS: PGOV PREL EAID TX

SUBJECT: DFM HAJIYEV HIGHLIGHTS TURKMENISTAN'S ASSISTANCE PRIORITIES

Classified By: Charge Sylvia Reed Curran, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: During a February 4 meeting with the Central Asia Assistance Review delegation, Turkmen Deputy Foreign Minister Wepa Hajiyev provided an outline of the country's ongoing reform process. He stressed that potential assistance donors needed to coordinate their proposals with the Turkmen government's priorities. He recognized that misunderstandings can hold up progress and urged dialogue and flexibility to enhance the likelihood for successful cooperation. He suggested that proposed assistance projects avoid areas already being addressed by other donors. Hajiyev mentioned the Civil Service Academy, science, agriculture, financial monitoring, education and health care as areas for expanded cooperation with the U.S. While Hajiyev stated that the Turkmen government would welcome cooperation, he made it clear that the government would not accept all offers and programs must take into account Turkmen priorities. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) During a February 4 meeting with the Central Asia Assistance Review delegation, Turkmen Deputy Foreign Minister Wepa Hajiyev outlined the country's ongoing reform process. Hajiyev described the "active" process of reform in Turkmenistan during the past three years. This was needed to create the basis for social and economic change. He emphasized that reform continues, especially in cooperation with international partners, in order to reach the country's potential. Hajiyev described the "evolution" of cooperation programs in Turkmenistan. Initially, reform was focused in the political and economic spheres and banking sector. Now, the government wants to work in new areas: local self governance; building capacity of civil society; improving the capacity of government officials; and improved analysis and oversight of financial activities.

MORE COORDINATION NEEDED

¶3. (C) Hajiyev urged greater coordination between donors and the Turkmen government on the importance of some assistance projects, noting that every country has its own specific priorities. He pointed out that the Turkmen government does not accept every assistance program that is proposed, but only those it considers useful. He appreciated that the U.S.

understands this, commenting that some countries do not understand, which puts the brakes on the process. Hajiyev also mentioned that, at times, the Foreign Ministry has difficulty explaining requirements or requests of donor countries to the relevant Turkmen authorities. For example, he mentioned requests for repeated visits to monitor the use of donated equipment in laboratories and in border areas. Such requests indicate to Turkmen officials a lack of trust or perhaps ulterior motives. Hajiyev suggested that in such situations, the two sides need to appreciate that each has its own practices and to reach a compromise. If each side insists on its own approach, it would be difficult to continue cooperation. Hajiyev noted that, while the Turkmen government appreciates U.S. support, Turkmenistan has evolved since the Freedom Support Act was adopted and has its own positions and policies. Turkmenistan was a different place ten years ago, and now has the resources to construct its own facilities. Still, Hajiyev remarked, the United States is a leading country with useful experience to share, but that the U.S. approach needs to be flexible. He also noted the progress of Turkmenistan's work with the UN, OSCE, and the EU.

AREAS FOR EXPANDED COOPERATION

¶4. (C) According to Hajiyev, the Turkmen government values its cooperation with the United States. Further, it would like to look at funding in new areas, such as science, agriculture, financial monitoring, education and health care.

The Foreign Ministry would give its complete support to such efforts, and in the area of scientific and technical research, would do its best to create favorable conditions.

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As part of Turkmenistan's initial stage of reform, the government paid attention to strategic planning and a systematic approach to development. There are three elements to its current policy on international cooperation. First, the government wants to study the experience of the world's leading countries. It would welcome a dialogue about its current areas of interest for cooperation, and the possibilities of partners such as the United States in these areas. Second, the government wants to raise the level of preparation of future leaders and officials, and welcomed U.S. cooperation in training those at the Civil Service Academy, who will work in ministries, as well as helping to prepare civil servants for the middle and upper ranks. Third, the government wants to strengthen its "democratic system," which would lead to a market economy. Hajiyev said the government is ready to start a dialogue on these issues, in line with Turkmen interests and the possibilities.

SUCCESSFUL COOPERATION WITH USAID

¶5. (C) Hajiyev cited the relationship between USAID and the Turkmen Ministry of Health as an example of good cooperation.

He felt that it showed we can work together to reach agreement on all issues. He emphasized the willingness of the Turkmen side to carry on a dialogue, saying that as long as dialogue continues, any problem can be solved. Regarding possible initiatives on local self-governance, the Turkmen government already works with UNDP and the UK Embassy in this area. U.S. cooperation would need to add something new to existing efforts or take a new direction. Hajiyev noted that there was an existing mechanism for cooperation between USAID and UNDP, pointing to a recent joint USAID-UNDP conference on accounting and auditing reforms. He also mentioned USAID's successful cooperation with the Academy of Sciences and suggested that there should be new directions for additional cooperation beyond the boundaries of current projects.

¶6. (C) Indicating that cooperation on addressing climate change would be welcome, Hajiyev noted that the government is paying more attention to reducing emissions into the atmosphere. He mentioned efforts to improve water use management and new equipment to clean-up the oil and gas and

agriculture sectors. Hajiyev said he did not understand why Turkmenistan is considered to be among the countries with a bad environmental record. He suggested that other countries do not have accurate information about the ecological situation in Turkmenistan, and that greater cooperation would change their views. He mentioned the Turkmen Lake project, which he said would recycle otherwise wasted drainage water for further use in the agriculture sector.

¶ 17. (C) In the area of security cooperation, Hajiyev thought there has been a significant investment to address Turkmenistan's security challenges. While the government values such projects, future programs need to include serious consideration of Turkmenistan's interests. The recently constructed Farap border crossing checkpoint was an example of good cooperation with the U.S. Professional training projects are also useful. The government views positively any programs that increase the counternarcotics and security capacity of Turkmenistan.

¶ 18. (C) COMMENT: The Turkmen government is open to cooperation with the U.S. in a number of fields. But such cooperation will only occur after having taken into account the Turkmen government's priorities. While the Turkmen have ample financial resources, they seem to recognize that they lack the expertise and experience to use their wealth effectively. Hajiyev's acknowledgment of the value of U.S. expertise is a sign that the door could be open to expanded cooperation, but only in areas that both sides deem worth pursuing. END COMMENT

CURRAN